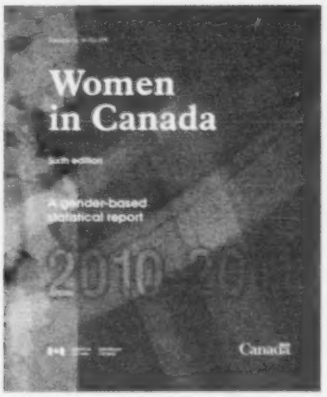
Component of Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-503-X
Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

Article



Senior Women

by Anne Milan and Mireille Vézina

July 2011

Statistics Canada Statistique Canada

Canada

How to obtain more information

For information about this product or the wide range of services and data available from Statistics Canada, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca, e-mail us at infostats@statcan.gc.ca, or telephone us, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the following numbers:

Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre

Toll-free telephone (Canada and United States):

Inquiries line	1-800-263-1136
National telecommunications device for the hearing impaired	1-800-363-7629
Fax line	1-877-287-4369

Local or international calls:

Inquiries line	1-613-951-8116
Fax line	1-613-951-0581

Depository Services Program

Inquiries line	1-800-635-7943
Fax line	1-800-565-7757

To access this product

This product, Catalogue no. 89-503-X, is available free in electronic format. To obtain a single issue, visit our website at www.statcan.gc.ca and browse by "Key resource" > "Publications."

Standards of service to the public

Statistics Canada is committed to serving its clients in a prompt, reliable and courteous manner. To this end, Statistics Canada has developed standards of service that its employees observe. To obtain a copy of these service standards, please contact Statistics Canada toll-free at 1-800-263-1136. The service standards are also published on www.statcan.gc.ca under "About us" "The agency" > "Providing services to Canadians."

Statistics Canada
Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division

Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report

Senior Women

Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada

© Minister of Industry, 2011

All rights reserved. The content of this electronic publication may be reproduced, in whole or in part, and by any means, without further permission from Statistics Canada, subject to the following conditions: that it be done solely for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary, and/or for non-commercial purposes; and that Statistics Canada be fully acknowledged as follows: Source (or "Adapted from", if appropriate): Statistics Canada, year of publication, name of product, catalogue number, volume and issue numbers, reference period and page(s). Otherwise, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form, by any means—electronic, mechanical or photocopy—or for any purposes without prior written permission of Licensing Services, Client Services Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0T6.

July 2011

Catalogue no. 89-503-X

ISBN 978-1-100-17400-6

Frequency: Occasional

Ottawa

Cette publication est également disponible en français.

Note of appreciation

Canada owes the success of its statistical system to a long-standing partnership between Statistics Canada, the citizens of Canada, its businesses, governments and other institutions. Accurate and timely statistical information could not be produced without their continued cooperation and goodwill.

User information

Symbols

The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

.	not available for any reference period
..	not available for a specific reference period
...	not applicable
0	true zero or a value rounded to zero
0s	value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
p	preliminary
r	revised
x	suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
E	use with caution
F	too unreliable to be published

Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible thanks to the collaboration and financial support of Status of Women Canada, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Justice Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Health Canada, Canadian Heritage, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada, Public Safety Canada, Western Economic Diversification Canada, Canadian Human Rights Commission, Department of National Defence, National Council of Welfare, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

This edition of *Women in Canada* was prepared by the Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division of Statistics Canada. The Statistics Canada team would like to acknowledge Status of Women for their role coordinating the review process with all partners.

Senior Women

by Anne Milan and Mireille Vézina

Introduction

Canada, like many industrialized countries, has an aging population. The continued growth in the number of women and men aged 65 years and over, with women representing the majority of older people, will have implications for many areas such as health services, caregiving, housing and pensions. This chapter provides an overview of senior women in the population, analysed in a historical context where appropriate. It examines their socio-demographic characteristics, including life expectancy, diversity, family and living arrangements, health and well-being, labour force participation and income.

Population aging continues

Canada had 4.8 million people aged 65 years and over on July 1, 2010 (Table 1). Of this senior population, 2.7 million, or 56%, were women, accounting for 16% of the total female population. According to the medium-growth scenario of the most recent population projections,[1] population aging in Canada is expected to accelerate from 2011 to 2031.[2] During this time, the large cohort of baby boomers born between 1946 and 1965, and aged 45 to 64 years in 2010, will reach their senior years. By 2031, projections show 9.6 million people would be aged 65 years and over, of whom 5.1 million would be women (53% of seniors and 24% of the total female population).[3] Population aging would continue in the years following 2031, but at a slower pace. By 2061, the last year of the projection period, there could be 13.4 million seniors in Canada, including 7.1 million women, comprising 53% of the senior population and about 27% of the overall female population.

In addition to the aging of the baby boom generation, population aging in Canada is largely the result of two other factors: a low fertility rate and higher life expectancy. First, the total fertility rate has been in the range of 1.5 to 1.7 children per woman, on average, over the last 30 years—below the replacement level of 2.1. Second, Canadians' life expectancy has increased substantially during the past century. Consequently, more people are reaching age 65 and surviving longer into their senior years.

1. Statistics Canada. 2010. *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2009 to 2036*. Catalogue no. 91-520-X.
2. Other scenarios are available, but population aging occurs in all scenarios.
3. Population projections in this chapter are based on the medium-growth projection scenario (M1), Demography Division, Custom Tabulation.

Table 1
Population aged 65 years and over, by sex, Canada, 1921 to 2061

Year	Women	Men	Total	Women aged 65 years and over as a percentage of total female population	Women as a percentage of population aged 65 years and over
	thousands			percentage	
1921	205.3	215.0	**420.2**	4.8	48.8
1931	281.5	294.6	**576.1**	5.6	48.9
1941	376.9	390.9	**767.8**	6.7	49.1
1951	535.0	551.3	**1,086.3**	7.7	49.2
1956	621.7	622.2	**1,243.9**	7.8	50.0
1961	717.0	674.1	**1,391.2**	7.9	51.5
1966	823.0	716.6	**1,539.5**	8.3	53.5
1971[1]	972.1	790.3	**1,762.4**	8.9	55.2
1976[1]	1,135.5	887.1	**2,022.6**	9.7	56.1
1981[1]	1,360.0	1,017.0	**2,377.0**	10.9	57.2
1986[1]	1,589.1	1,147.5	**2,736.6**	12.1	58.1
1991[1]	1,864.4	1,348.0	**3,212.5**	13.2	58.0
1996[1]	2,065.4	1,513.8	**3,579.3**	13.8	57.7
2001[1]	2,238.3	1,684.0	**3,922.3**	14.3	57.1
2006[1]	2,438.5	1,886.3	**4,324.8**	14.8	56.4
2010[1]	2,681.6	2,138.0	**4,819.6**	15.6	55.6
Projections					
2011	2,760.3	2,214.1	**4,974.4**	15.9	55.5
2016	3,260.0	2,696.3	**5,956.3**	17.7	54.7
2021	3,844.7	3,246.8	**7,091.5**	19.9	54.2
2026	4,506.7	3,876.8	**8,383.5**	22.2	53.8
2031	5,135.2	4,475.5	**9,610.7**	24.2	53.4
2036	5,538.1	4,841.5	**10,379.6**	25.0	53.4
2041	5,838.2	5,101.1	**10,939.3**	25.4	53.4
2046	6,130.4	5,355.6	**11,486.0**	25.7	53.4
2051	6,434.0	5,649.7	**12,083.7**	26.0	53.2
2056	6,756.8	5,979.9	**12,736.7**	26.4	53.0
2061	7,086.2	6,312.1	**13,398.3**	26.7	52.9

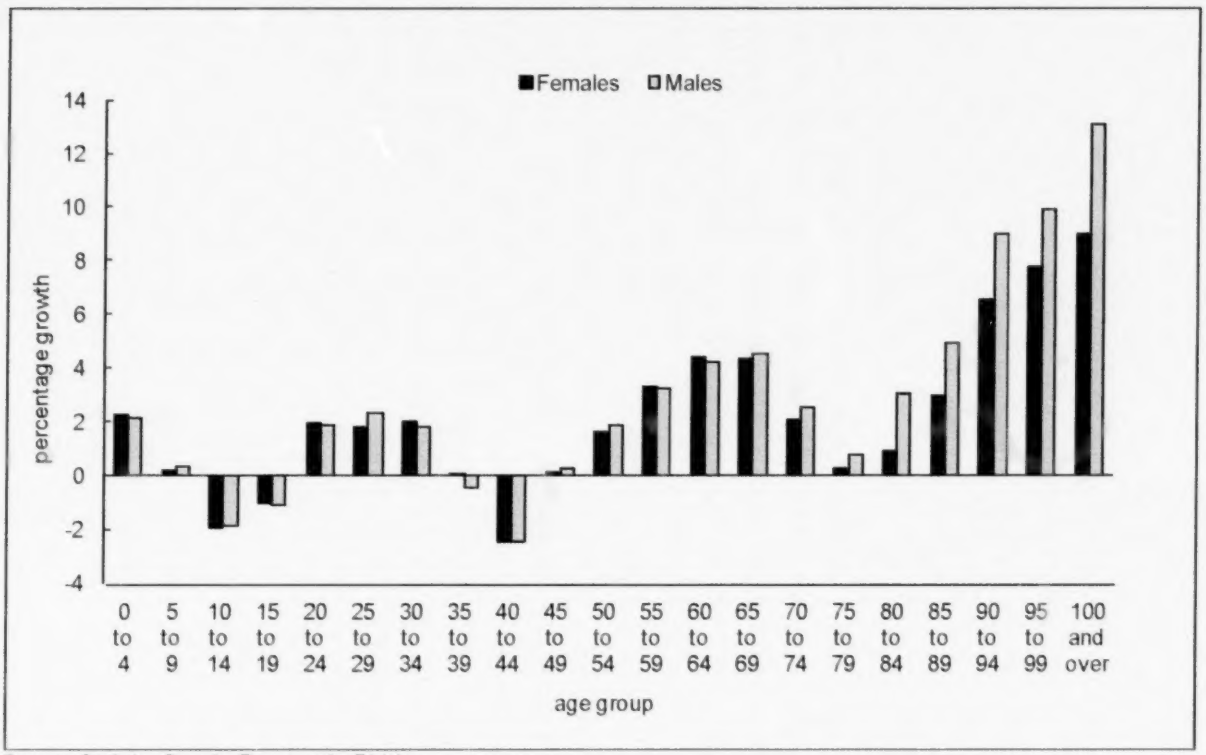
1. Estimates adjusted for net census under coverage.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1921 to 1966; and Demography Division, 1971 to 2006; and *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories*. Catalogue no. 91-215-X, 2010; and Demography Division, Custom Tabulation based on medium-growth projection scenario (M1), 2011 to 2061.

As of July 1, 2010, 1.3 million people were aged 80 and over, of whom 839,900, or 63%, were women. According to the most recent population projections, this age group would have 1.6 million women by 2031, and 2.9 million women by 2061. On July 1, 2010, Canada had about 6,500 centenarians—people aged 100 years and over—and about 5,200, or four-fifths, were women. Less than a decade earlier, in 2001, there were 3,400 centenarians: 2,900 were women, or 84% of this age group. The number of female centenarians could reach 14,000 by 2031 and 60,700 by 2061, still comprising close to four-fifths of the 17,600 and 78,300 centenarians in each respective year.

From July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, population percentage growth of the baby boomers was high, but that of the oldest old was even higher (Chart 1). In fact, centenarians had the highest growth of all age groups during the 2009/2010 period, although the 9.0% growth of female centenarians was slower than that of male centenarians, at 13%. The percentage growth of people in their nineties was also high, again with slower growth for women than men.

Chart 1
Percentage growth, by age group and sex, Canada, July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010



Source: Statistics Canada, Demography Division.

Increasing life expectancy

The primary reason for the greater number of older women than older men is women's longer life expectancy. According to the age-specific mortality rates observed in 2007, a baby girl could expect to live 83.0 years; a baby boy, 78.5 years.[4] Canadian women who were aged 65 in 2007 could expect to live another 21.3 years; men of that age, an additional 18.3 years (Table 2). Life expectancy has been steadily rising based on the data recorded since 1921. Even women who were aged 80 in 2007 could expect to live another 10.2 years; men of that age, another 8.5 years.

The gap, however, between women's and men's life expectancies has been narrowing since the late 1970s. This might explain the more rapid growth of men compared with women in the oldest age groups. If this trend continues in the coming decades, it may eventually produce a greater balance in the number of senior women and men. Women aged 65 years and over made up about 58% of the total senior population from about the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s; by the early 2030s, their share is projected to decrease to 53%. This trend has implications: for example, both spouses surviving longer may allow for mutual informal care and support.

Among countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), women's life expectancy, based on 2006-to-2007 data, was higher than Canada's in Japan (86 years), France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain and Australia (about 84 years).[5] A life expectancy at birth at or about 83 years for women was reported in some other OECD countries: Finland, Sweden, Austria, Norway, Iceland, Germany and South Korea.

Table 2
Remaining life expectancy of women and men at age 65, Canada, 1921 to 2007

Year	Women	Men	Total
	years		
1921	13.6	13.0	**13.3**
1931	13.7	13.0	**13.3**
1941	14.1	12.8	**13.4**
1951	15.0	13.3	**14.1**
1961	16.1	13.6	**14.8**
1971	17.6	13.8	**15.7**
1981	18.9	14.6	**16.8**
1991	19.9	15.7	**18.0**
2001	20.5	17.0	**18.8**
2007[p]	21.3	18.3	**19.9**

[p] preliminary

Note: 1921 to 1981 data are based on life expectancy for those aged 65 to 70 years. The year 1921 excludes Quebec and 1921 to 1941 excludes Newfoundland and Labrador.

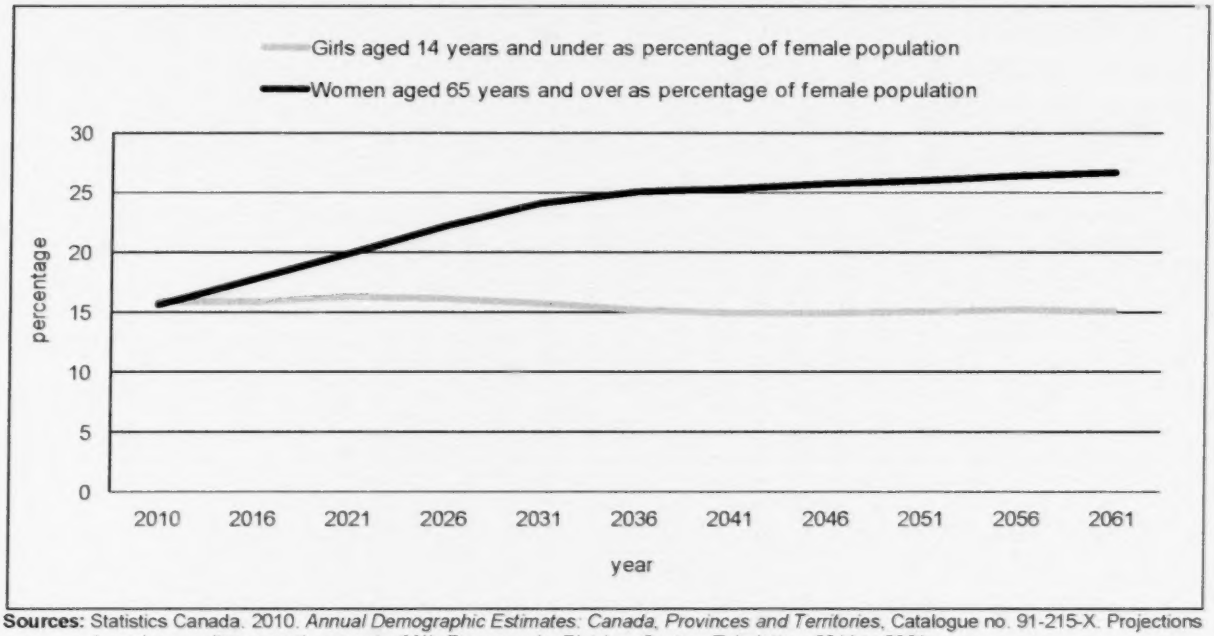
Sources: Statistics Canada, D. Nagnur. 1986. *Longevity and Historical Life Tables: 1921-1981 (Abridged) Canada and the Provinces*. Catalogue no. 89-506, 1921 to 1981. *Life Tables, Canada, Provinces and Territories*. Catalogue no. 84-537, 1991 and 2001. Demography Division, 2007.

Despite the relatively high life expectancy of senior women overall in Canada, there is some variation. In the territories, which have a high Aboriginal population, life expectancy for women at age 65 is more than two years lower than in the country as a whole.[6] A lower life expectancy and, to an even greater extent, higher fertility, contribute to a younger Aboriginal population compared with the general Canadian population. Consequently, the demographic situation of the Aboriginal population is unique in Canada. While 14% of the total female population in Canada was composed of senior women in 2006, this was the case for 5.1% of the female population with an Aboriginal identity. In contrast, the Aboriginal female population had a much higher share of girls aged 14 and under (28%) than did the overall female population (17%).

4. Life expectancy data for 2007 are preliminary.
5. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2010. Life expectancy at birth: Women. *OECD Factbook, 2010*.
6. Statistics Canada. 2010. *Deaths 2007*. Catalogue no. 84F0211X.

The proportion of women aged 65 years and over, relative to the total female population, will increase in the coming years, while that of girls aged 14 years and under will remain fairly stable (Chart 2). In fact, the share of women aged 65 and over (15.9%) is projected to surpass that of girls aged 14 and under (15.8%) for the first time in Canadian history as soon as 2011. The gap would continue to widen to about 12 percentage points in 2061, the end of the most recent projection period. At that point, senior women would make up 27% of the total female population; girls aged 14 and under, 15%.

Chart 2
Girls aged 14 years and under and women aged 65 years and over as a percentage of the female population, Canada, 2010 to 2061



Sources: Statistics Canada. 2010. *Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories*, Catalogue no. 91-215-X. Projections based on medium-growth scenario (M1), Demography Division, Custom Tabulation, 2011 to 2061.

Diversity of senior women[7]

The diverse nature of senior women is revealed in the data on visible minority status and immigrant status. Females who belonged to visible minority groups had a younger age structure than the overall female population. In 2006, 14% of the total female population were aged 65 and over, while 7.8% of females belonging to a visible minority group were seniors. The percentage of girls aged 14 years and under in the female visible minority population was higher (22%) than in the total female population (17%).

According to the 2006 Census, 8.9% of senior women belonged to a visible minority group in 2006 compared with 21% of girls aged 14 years and under. About 17% of all women aged 15 to 64 reported a visible minority status in 2006. However, among the visible minority population, particular differences emerge by visible minority group according to age (Table 3). Senior women who belonged to the visible minority population were proportionally more likely to be Chinese (35%) compared with girls aged 14 years and under (19%). In contrast, women aged 65 years and over who were Black were proportionally fewer, at 13%, than were girls aged 14 and under, at 19%. Fewer senior women belonged to multiple visible minority groups (1.6%) compared with girls aged 14 and under (4.0%).

7. This section is based on the 2006 Census; therefore, one person in the household might have completed the census questionnaire for all household members, particularly for children. Consequently, while aspects of diversity such as visible minority status or immigrant status are often referred to in the census as self-reported, they may be reported by the respondent on behalf of individual household members.

Table 3
Females belonging to visible minority groups, by age group, Canada, 2006

Visible minority group	14 years and under	15 to 64 years	65 years and over
	percentage		
Total visible minority population	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Chinese	19.0	24.7	34.8
South Asian	26.2	23.5	22.8
Black	19.5	14.8	13.1
Filipino	7.7	9.5	8.3
Southeast Asian	4.7	4.8	4.1
Latin American	5.3	6.4	3.9
Japanese	1.3	1.7	3.1
Arab	6.1	4.5	2.9
Korean	2.2	3.1	2.1
West Asian	2.7	3.1	2.0
Multiple visible minority groups	4.0	2.3	1.6
Other visible minority	1.3	1.5	1.4

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

The immigrant female population had an older age structure than the overall female population.[8] About 20% of immigrant females were aged 65 years and over, while 5.3% were girls aged 14 years and under. Proportionally more senior women were immigrants in 2006 compared with younger women—29% of women aged 65 years and over were immigrants, compared with 22% of women aged 15 to 64 and 6.3% of girls 14 years and under. More than three-fifths (63%) of senior immigrant women were born in Europe—including the United Kingdom (18%) and Italy (11%)—followed by Asia and the Middle East (23%), Central America, South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda (6.7%) and Africa (2.6%). About 4.4% of senior immigrant women were born in the United States. Most senior immigrant women had been in Canada for many years while 3.2% arrived in the 2001-to-2006 period.

Many senior women live in a family context[9]

Most senior women live in private households; many live as part of a couple. Of women 65 years and over, 46% lived as part of a couple in 2006, as did 76% of senior men. From age 15 to 39, a higher proportion of women were in couples than men, since women tend to be slightly younger than their spouses or partners (Chart 3). By their early forties, roughly equal proportions of women and men were living as part of a couple in 2006 (73% each), but the disparity began to widen from age 45 to 49 onward: fewer women in couples than men reflected not only the age pattern of union formation but also women's higher life expectancy. Although this pattern continued in 2006, it was less pronounced than in the past as recent gains in longevity have been occurring more rapidly for men. The increased proportion of women who were spouses or partners is particularly evident among women in their early seventies. In 1981, 43% of women aged 70 to 74 were part of couples, increasing to 55% in 2006. The percentage of women aged 75 and over with spouses or partners advanced from 23% in 1981 to 31% in 2006. The percentage of men aged 70 to 74 who were part of couples increased from 77% in 1981 to 79% in 2006. Among men aged 75 and over, the corresponding increase was from 65% to 71%. More seniors in couples can be at least partly attributed to Canadians' higher life expectancy, as well as remarriage and union formation at older ages, which can enable relationships to exist well into the senior years.

8. In the context of the census, the immigrant population includes some people who have resided in Canada for many years, while others have arrived recently. These data include a small number of immigrants born in Canada and exclude non-permanent residents.
9. The census data in this section refer to the population in private households.

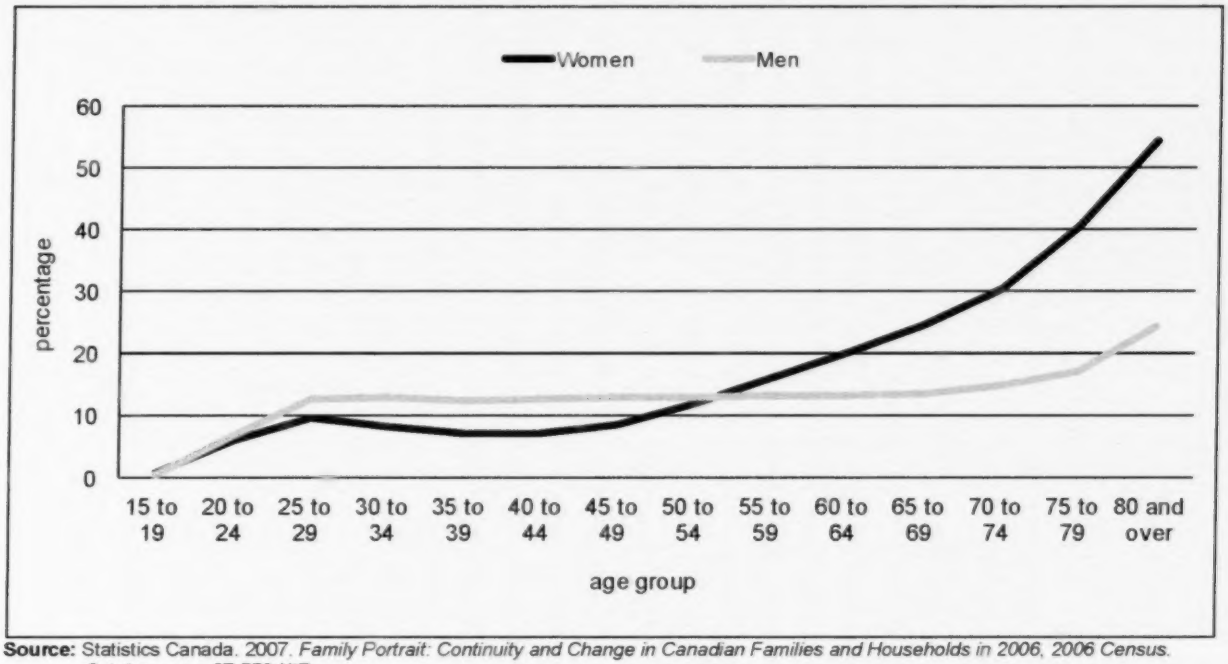
Chart 3
Population in couples, by age group and sex, Canada, 2006

Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. *Family Portrait: Continuity and Change in Canadian Families and Households in 2006, 2006 Census.* Catalogue no. 97-553-XIE.

In 2006, 96% of senior women in couples were married; the remaining 4% lived in common-law unions. The number of women in common-law unions, while low, has been increasing. From 2001 to 2006, the growth of senior women in common-law unions was 54% compared with a 13% growth of senior women in couples overall. As common-law unions become more accepted by older generations, and as the population living common-law in their younger and middle adult years grow older, the number of women who live common-law in their senior years can also be expected to rise. Many seniors who lived common-law in 2006 had been previously married. Among women 65 years and over who were in a common-law union in 2006, 43% had a legal marital status of divorced or separated, 38% were widowed and 19% had never been legally married. Among senior men, these figures were 59%, 22% and 20%, respectively.

While many senior women in private households lived as part of couples in 2006, a large proportion also lived alone; this pattern became more pronounced throughout the senior years. According to 2006 Census data, a higher proportion of men lived alone than did women up until their early fifties, reflecting earlier union formation for women as well as the tendency to be younger than their spouse or partner. By their mid- to late fifties, however, this pattern reversed (Chart 4). Thirty-seven percent of women 65 years and over lived alone in 2006, more than double the 17% of senior men who did so. This gap continued to widen throughout the senior years, owing to women's greater longevity and, consequently, a higher proportion of women who were widowed. Fifty-four percent of women aged 80 and over lived alone, compared with 24% of men in that age group. Living alone during the senior years, particularly for the oldest old, could have implications, to the extent that there is more reliance on formal or informal care, and for other issues such as housing needs and finances.

Chart 4
Population who live alone by age group and sex, Canada, 2006



Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. *Family Portrait: Continuity and Change in Canadian Families and Households in 2006, 2006 Census.* Catalogue no. 97-553-XIE.

Besides living as part of a couple or living alone, senior women live in other types of private-household arrangements—for example, with adult children or with other relatives.[10] In 2006, 7.8% of senior women lived with their adult children and 7.3% lived with relatives, as did 2.2% and 2.6% of senior men, respectively. However, living arrangements involving multiple generations sharing a home could mean that exchanges of support flow in either direction. In addition, a small percentage of both women, 1.6%, and men, 1.8%, lived only with non-relatives such as a roommate.

Many recent senior immigrant women live with relatives

Within the population of senior women exists much variation in living arrangements. Senior immigrant women and men were more likely to live with relatives, although this was more common for senior women than for men. Close to 13% of senior immigrant women lived with relatives, as did 3.4% of senior immigrant men (Table 4). Among recent immigrants—those who arrived from 2001 to 2006—the proportions were 40% and 9.5%, respectively. Most senior immigrant women arrive in the Family Class immigration stream as either parents or grandparents and are thus supported by their sponsor for 10 years. Among the non-immigrant population, 5.0% of women aged 65 years and over, and 2.3% of men in this age group, lived with relatives.

Thirty percent of senior immigrant women lived alone, compared with 40% of senior non-immigrant women. Of senior immigrant women who had arrived in the five years prior to the 2006 Census, 8.3% lived alone. The corresponding percentages for men aged 65 years and over who lived alone were less than half of the figures for senior women in each of these respective categories: 13%, 19% and 2.7%.

10. Living with adult children refers to seniors living as lone parents—that is, with sons and daughters who do not have a spouse, common-law partner or children of their own in the same household. Living with relatives could include living with adult children who have a spouse, common-law partner or children of their own in the same household or with siblings, cousins, nephews or nieces or other extended family members. See the concept of census family in the *Census dictionary* for more information.

Table 4
Living arrangements of women and men aged 65 years and over by immigrant status, Canada, 2006

Living arrangements	Women			Men		
	Non-immigrants	All immigrants	Recent immigrants[1]	Non-immigrants	All immigrants	Recent immigrants[1]
	percentage					
Living with family	**57.8**	**69.0**	**89.6**	**79.3**	**85.7**	**95.8**
Spouses	43.5	46.0	38.7	70.3	77.5	82.2
Common-law partners	2.0	0.9	0.7	4.6	2.2	1.0
Lone parents	7.1	9.3	10.3	2.0	2.5	3.0
Children	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Living with relatives	5.0	12.6	39.7	2.3	3.4	9.5
Not living with family	**42.2**	**31.0**	**10.4**	**20.7**	**14.3**	**4.2**
Living with non-relatives only	1.7	1.3	2.0	2.1	1.4	1.5
Living alone	40.5	29.7	8.3	18.6	12.9	2.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

1. Recent immigrants are immigrants who arrived in Canada from 2001 to 2006. They are a subgroup of the immigrant category.
Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

Extent of social network decreases with age for senior women

Network of family and friend can be a source of support and play an important role in senior's feelings of satisfaction with life as a whole.[11]

In 2008, almost all (98%) women aged 65 and over reported having at least one family member whom they felt close to, that is, whom they felt at ease with and could talk to about what was on their mind and whom they could ask for help (Table 5).

11. In this and subsequent sections that use General Social Survey data or Canadian Community Health Survey data, people living in private households are included in the analysis, whereas people living in institutions and collective dwellings are excluded.

Table 5
Characteristics of social networks and senior women's and men's feeling about life as a whole, by age group, Canada, 2008

Characteristic	Women		Men		Total	
	65 to 74 years	75 years and over	65 to 74 years	75 years and over	Women aged 65 years and over	Men aged 65 years and over
	average score					
Satisfaction with life as a whole[1]	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.1	**8.2**	**8.2**
	percentage					
Feeling about life as a whole						
Happy and interested in life	79.3	79.1	77.2	77.7	**79.2**	**77.4**
Somewhat happy	18.5	18.8	20.5	18.1	**18.7**	**19.5**
Somewhat unhappy	2.2 [E]	2.1 [E]	2.4 [E]	4.2 [E]	**1.2**	**3.1** [E]
Number of family members respondent feels close to						
None	1.6 [E] ‡	2.3 [E]	5.1 ‡	3.4 [E]	**1.9** ‡	**4.4**
One to four	41.0 *	46.8	42.3	43.5	**43.8**	**42.8**
Five or more	57.3 *	51.0	52.7	53.0	**54.3**	**52.8**
Number of friends respondent feels close to						
None	9.6 *	14.5	9.8 *	14.7	**12.0**	**11.8**
One or two	21.3 ‡	23.9 ‡	17.3 ‡	13.3 ‡	**22.6** ‡	**15.6**
Three or more	69.1	61.6 ‡	72.9	72.0 ‡	**65.5** ‡	**72.5**
Number of friends excluding closest						
None	11.0 ‡	13.6 ‡	8.2 *	12.0 ‡	**12.2**	**9.8**
At least one	89.0 ‡	86.4 ‡	91.8 *	88.0 ‡	**87.8**	**90.2**
Daily contacts						
Family	9.7 ‡	11.4 ‡	6.1 ‡	8.0 ‡	**10.5** ‡	**6.9**
Friends	11.1	14.1	11.6	15.4	**12.5**	**13.2**
Respondent misses having people around						
Yes	25.0 ‡	34.0 ‡	28.2 ‡	33.4 ‡	**29.3** ‡	**30.3**
More or less	16.8 *	13.5	14.4	13.4	**15.2**	**14.0**
No	58.2 *	52.5	57.4	53.3	**55.5**	**55.7**

‡ statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
* statistically significant difference between age groups at $p < 0.05$
1. To measure satisfaction with life we use a scale that goes from 1 to 10, where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied."
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2008 – Social Networks.

The size of family networks diminishes somewhat by age group. Women aged 75 and over (51%) were slightly less likely than those aged 65 to 74 (57%) to have five or more family members whom they felt close to. Similar differences are observed with respect to having close friends. Women aged 75 and over were more likely than younger women to have no friends whom they felt close to. In 2008, 10% of women aged 65 to 74 reported no close friends, compared with 15% of those aged 75 and over.

Senior women living alone reported fewer people whom they felt close to than their counterparts living in couples. More specifically, among women living alone just under half (49%) reported feeling close to five or more people within their family. By comparison, the corresponding proportion was 59% for those in couples (Table 6).

Even though they felt close to fewer people, senior women living alone were more likely than those living in couples to have more frequent daily contacts. For example, nearly one senior woman in five (18%) living alone reported getting together daily with one or more members of their friends, double the proportion recorded for women living in couples (9.2%).

Table 6
Social network characteristics of senior women and men, by living arrangement, Canada, 2008

Characteristic	Women aged 65 years and over		Men aged 65 years and over	
	Living alone	In a couple	Living alone	In a couple
	average score			
Satisfaction with life as a whole[1]	8.0	8.4	7.6	8.3
	percentage			
Feeling about life as a whole				
Happy and interested in life	75.4 * ‡	82.0	68.7 * ‡	79.9
Somewhat happy	21.2 *	16.8	26.2 *	17.4
Somewhat unhappy	3.4 *	1.2 E ‡	5.1 E*	2.8 E
Number of family members respondent feels close to				
None	3.2 *	...	6.1 E ‡	3.7 E
One to four	48.0 *	40.6	49.2 *	41.8
Five or more	48.8 *	58.8	44.7 *	54.5
Number of friends respondent feels close to				
None	11.4	9.2	15.0 *	10.2
One to two	23.7 ‡	20.6 ‡	18.8 ‡	14.6
Three or more	64.9 *	70.2 ‡	66.2 *	75.2
Number of friends excluding closest				
None	12.6	9.9	14.5 *	7.6
At least one	87.4	90.1	85.5 *	92.4
Daily contacts				
Family	13.0 *	8.2 ‡	11.1 *	5.9
Friends	18.1 *	8.9	20.2 *	11.5
Respondent misses having people around				
Yes	32.9 *	26.4	37.4 *	29.2
More or less	15.8	14.9	13.5	14.5
No	51.3 *	58.7	49.1 *	56.3

* statistically significant difference between persons living alone and persons in a couple at $p < 0.05$
‡ statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
1. To measure satisfaction with life we use a scale that goes from 1 to 10, where 1 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2008 – Social Networks.

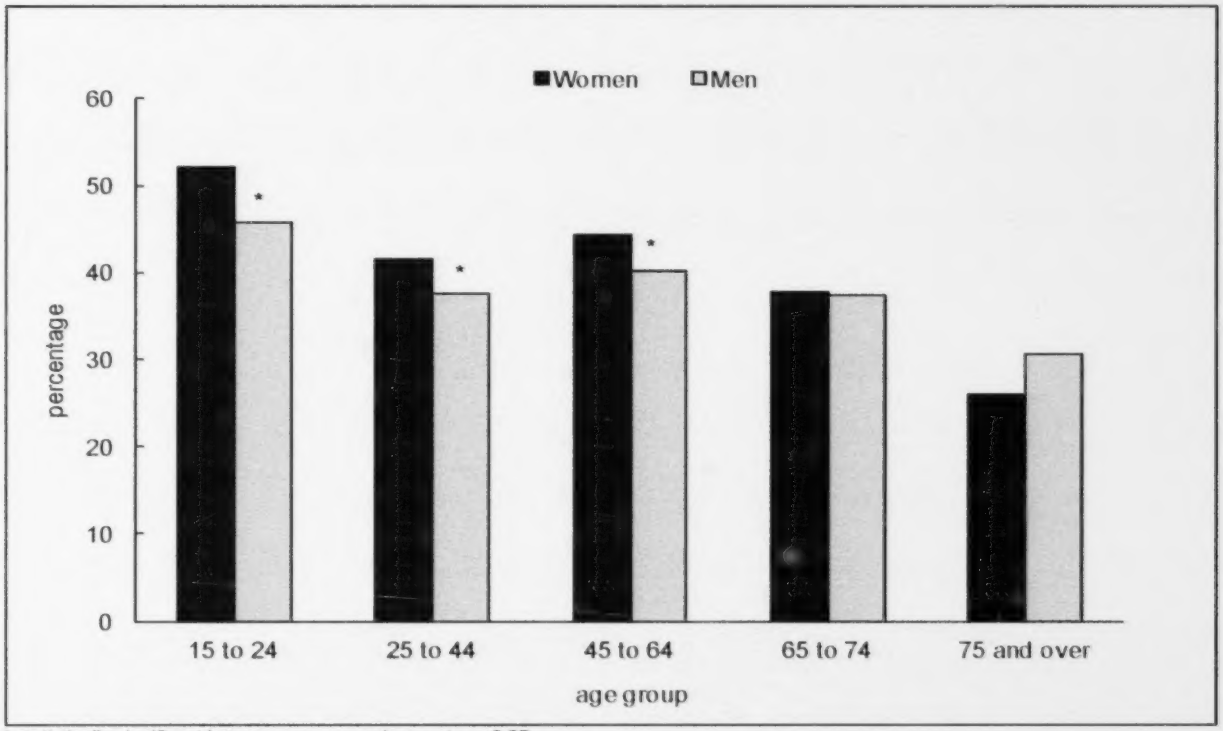
While the majority of senior women reported that they were satisfied with their social life, those living alone were more likely to say that they missed having people around. One woman in three (33%) aged 65 and over living alone reported that they missed having people around, while for those living in couples, the corresponding proportion was 26%. However, the gap was wider for senior men: 37% of those living alone reported that they missed having people around, compared to 29% of those in couples (Table 6).

Three-quarters (75%) of senior women living alone reported that they were happy and interested in life. Nevertheless, this proportion was smaller than for women in couples (82%) and senior women in general (79%). Once again, living alone seemed to have a greater affect on senior men: 69% of men living alone reported that they were happy and interested in life, compared with 80% of those in couples.

Nearly one senior woman in three had done volunteer work

In 2008, approximately 3 in 10 senior women (32%) had done volunteer work, up from 26% in 2003. Participation in this activity decreases with age. Among women aged 75 and over, 26% reported that they had done volunteer work in the 12 months preceding the survey (Chart 5).

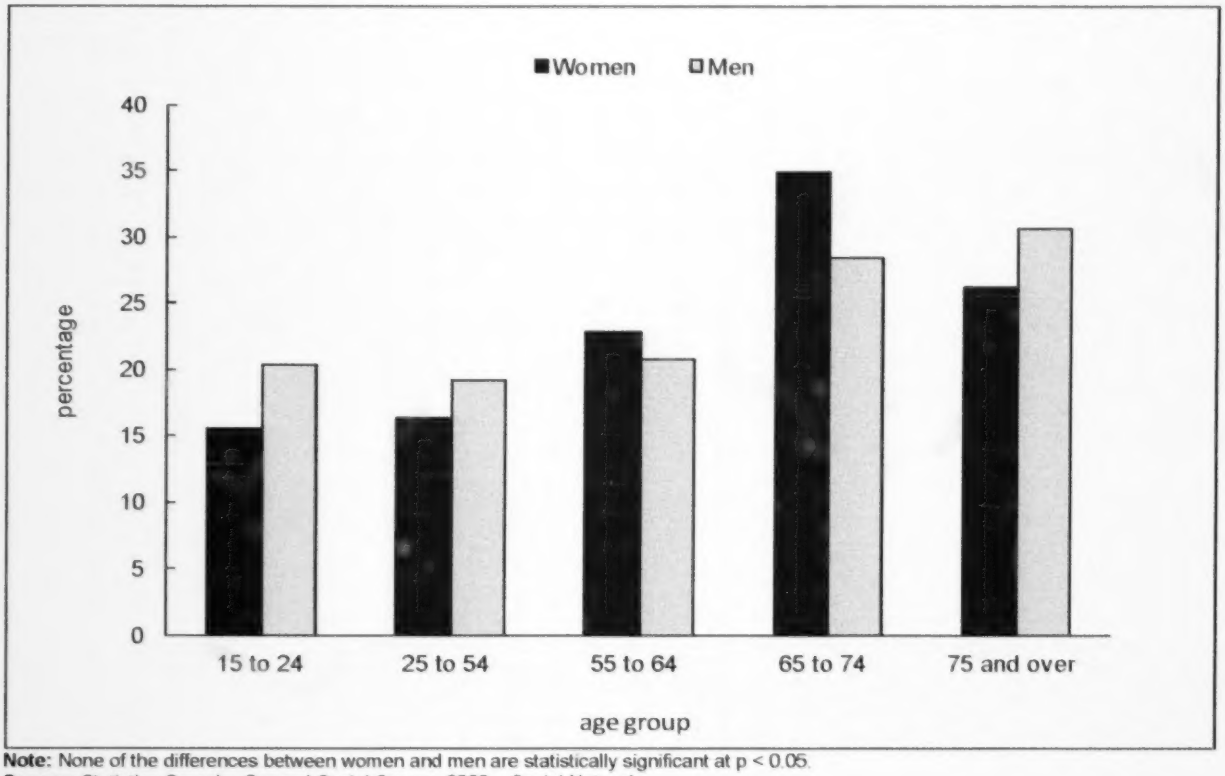
Chart 5
Senior women and men who did volunteer work, by age group, Canada, 2008



* statistically significant between women and men at $p < 0.05$

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2008 – Social Networks.

Chart 6
***Senior women and men* who did more than 15 hours of volunteer work per month, by age group, Canada, 2008**



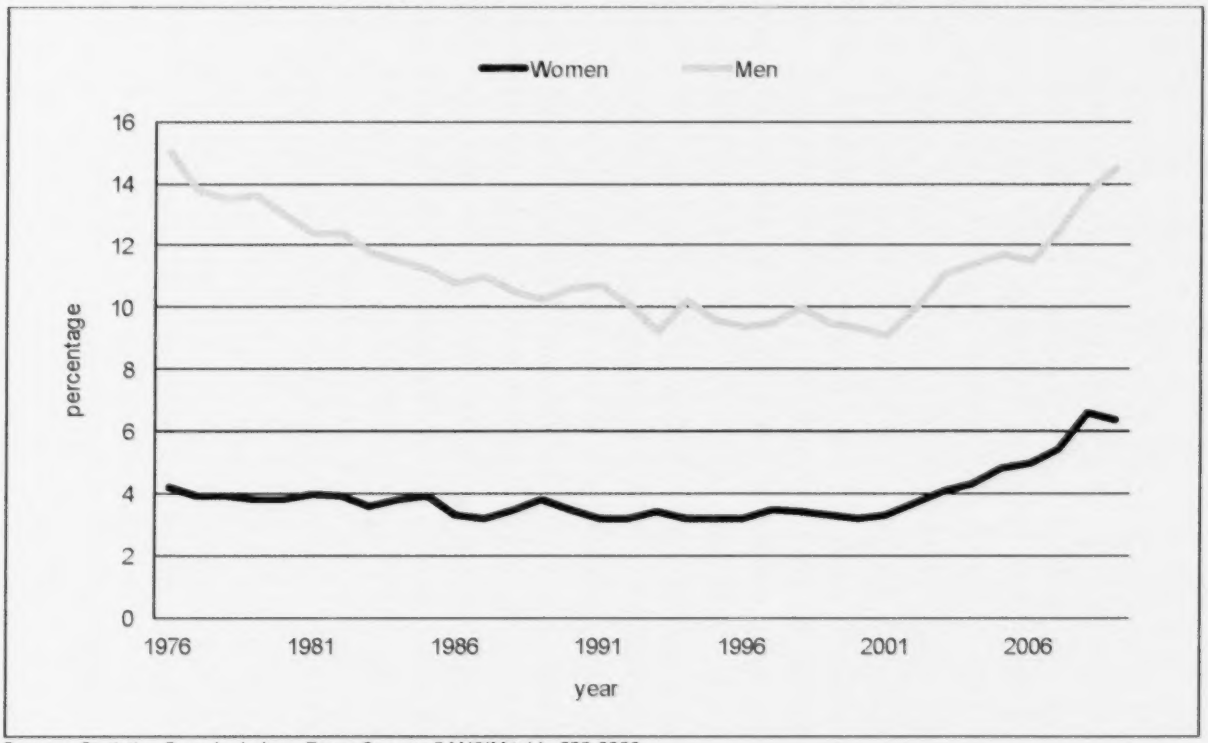
Note: None of the differences between women and men are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2008 – Social Networks.

In 2008, women aged 65 to 74 were especially likely to put in a large number of hours doing volunteer work. In fact, the percentage of those who had done more than 15 hours of volunteer work per month was 35% (Chart 6). By comparison, the corresponding proportion was 16% for women aged 25 to 54.

The proportion of senior women holding a paid job doubled in the past decade

In 2009, 6.4% of women aged 65 and over held a paid job, double the proportion that did so in 2000 (3.2%). For senior men as well, the percentage holding a paid job went up during this period, increasing from 9% in 2000 to 15% between 2000 and in 2009. The increase observed for senior women and men in the 2000s marks a break with the trends observed in previous decades (Chart 7).

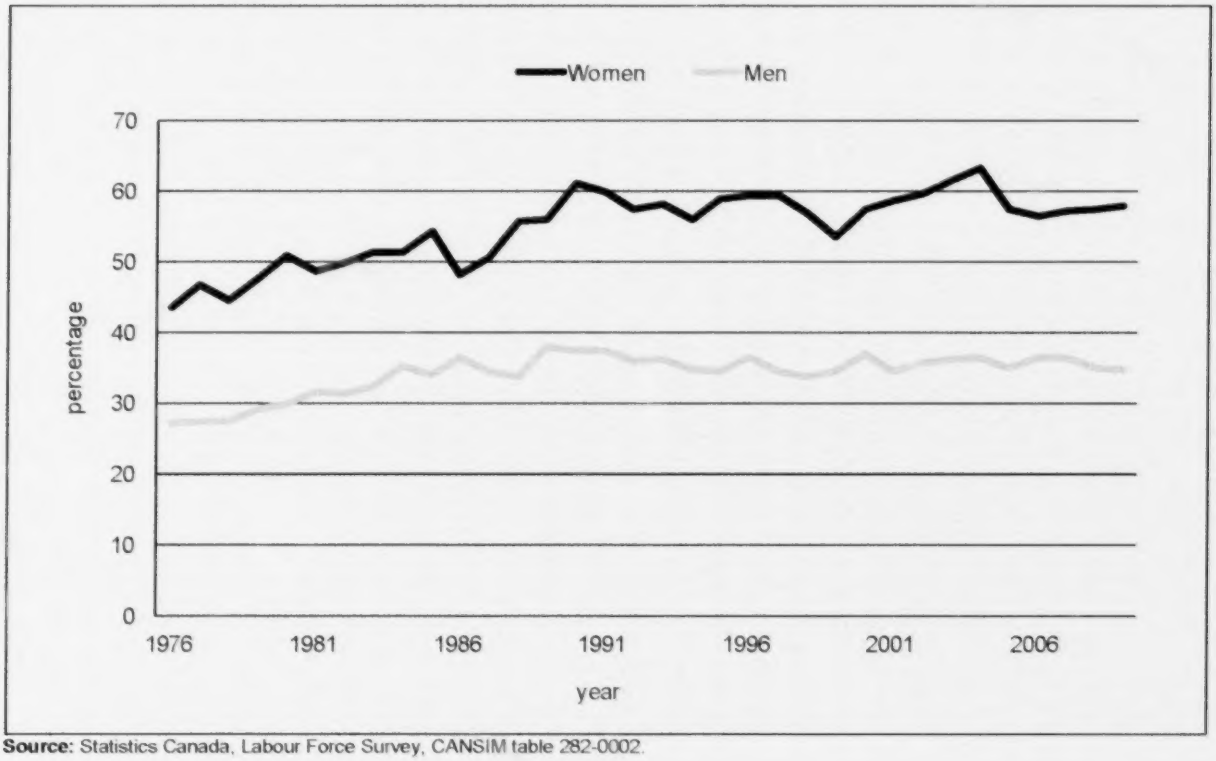
Chart 7
Employment rates of women and men aged 65 years and over, Canada, 1976 to 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM table 282-0002.

While employment rates increased for senior women, more than half of those employed (58%) worked part-time in 2009. For senior men, the corresponding proportion was 35% for the same year. Unlike women, the percentage of senior men holding a part-time job has remained stable since the mid-1990s (Chart 8).

Chart 8
Women and men aged 65 years and over holding a job who are working part-time, Canada, 1976 to 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM table 282-0002.

In the past century, women's participation in the labour force has steadily increased. This trend is reflected in the declining percentage of senior women who never had paid work in their lifetime. In 1976, more than four women in 10 (42%) had never held a paid job. The proportion fell over the decades that followed, declining to 14% in 2009 (Chart 9).

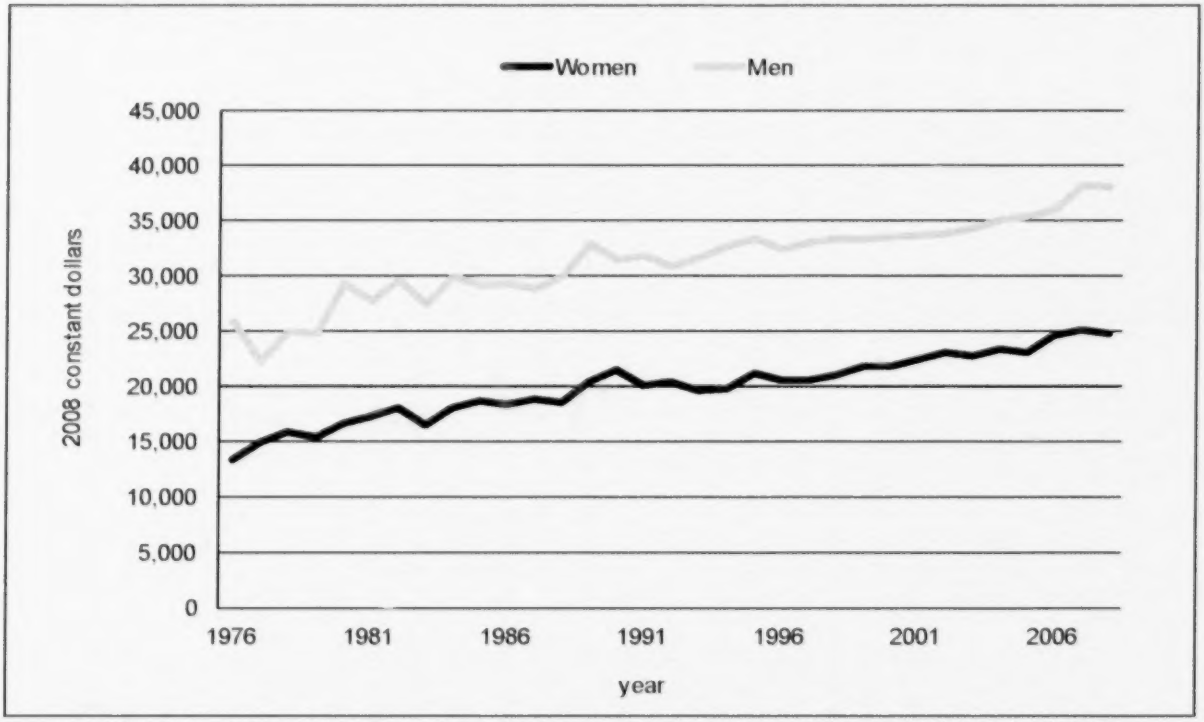
Chart 9
Women and men aged 65 years and over who never had paid employment in their lifetime, Canada, 1976 to 2009

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2009.

Increased average income and more diverse income sources

Senior women's average income after tax from all sources went from $22,800 to $24,800 between 2003 and 2008. Despite this increase, senior women's average income remained lower than that of senior men, which was $38,100 in 2008 (Chart 10). Since the mid-2000s, men's average income has remained approximately 1.5 to 1.6 times higher than that of women.

Chart 10
Average income of women and men aged 65 years and over, Canada, 1976 to 2008



Sources: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances and Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, CANSIM table 202-0403.

Labour market income accounted for nearly half (47%) of the income of women aged 65 and over in 2008, an increase of 7 percentage points from 1998 (Table 7). While on the rise, women's labour market income remains lower than that of men. In fact, this type of income accounted for nearly two-thirds (63%) of the total income of men aged 65 and over in 2008.

Table 7
Income sources as percentage of total income of women and men aged 65 years and over, Canada, 1998 and 2008

Income source	1998		2008	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
	dollars (millions)			
Total income	**40,996**	**50,582**	**58,662**	**74,093**
	percentage			
Market income	**40.2**	**55.4**	**47.4**	**62.5**
Earnings	2.3	7.9	4.9	11.8
Salaries, wages and commissions	1.8	4.7	3.9	7.9
Self-employment income	0.5	3.2	1.0	3.9
Self-employment, farm	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.2
Self-employment, non-farm	0.3	2.7	1.0	3.7
Investment income	14.1	11.3	11.0	10.5
Retirement income[1]	21.7	34.9	28.6	36.6
Other income	2.1	1.3	2.9	3.6
Government transfers	**59.8**	**44.6**	**52.6**	**37.5**
Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement and Spouse's Allowance	36.6	20.9	30.0	16.9
Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan	19.9	21.1	19.7	18.0
Child Tax Credit	F	F	F	F
Unemployment Insurance benefits	F	0.2	0.1	0.3
Workers' compensation benefits	0.5	0.7	0.4	1.0
Goods and Services Tax and Harmonized Sales Tax credits	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.4
Provincial and territorial tax credits	1.0	0.6	1.1	0.6
Social assistance	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.1
Other government transfers	..	..	F	F

1. Retirement income includes pensions benefits superannuation payments or annuities generated by employer pension plans.
Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, CANSIM table 202-0407.

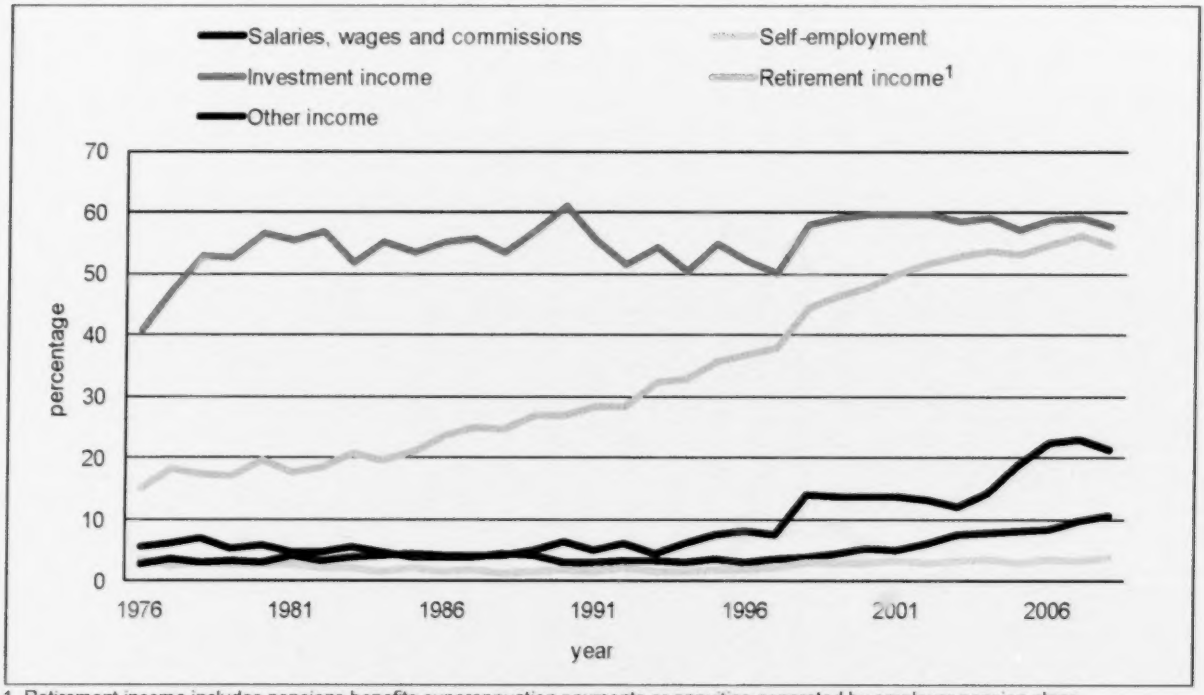
Government transfers have declined

The largest source of income for senior women continues to be government transfers, which include Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Spouse's Allowance, the Canada Pension Plan and the Quebec Pension Plan. Government transfers accounted for more than half (53%) of senior women's total income in 2008, while for senior men, the corresponding proportion was 38%.

For the past 10 years, the share of senior women's income coming from government transfers has been declining. This decrease is attributable in part to the decrease in the percentage represented by Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Spouse's Allowance. This percentage went from 37% in 1998 to 30% in 2008. At the same time, employment income and the employment rates of those doing paid work increased among senior women.

From 1976 to 2008, retirement income was the income source that registered the strongest increase. In 1976, only 15% of the total income of women aged 65 and over consisted of retirement income. That proportion steadily increased in the next three decades. In 2008, retirement income accounted for 54% of senior women's income from all sources (Chart 11). This is attributable to the fact that more of these women held a paid job during their lifetime.

Chart 11
Women aged 65 years and over receiving income from various sources, Canada, 1976 to 2008



1. Retirement income includes pensions benefits superannuation payments or annuities generated by employer pension plans.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances and Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, CANSIM table 202-0407.

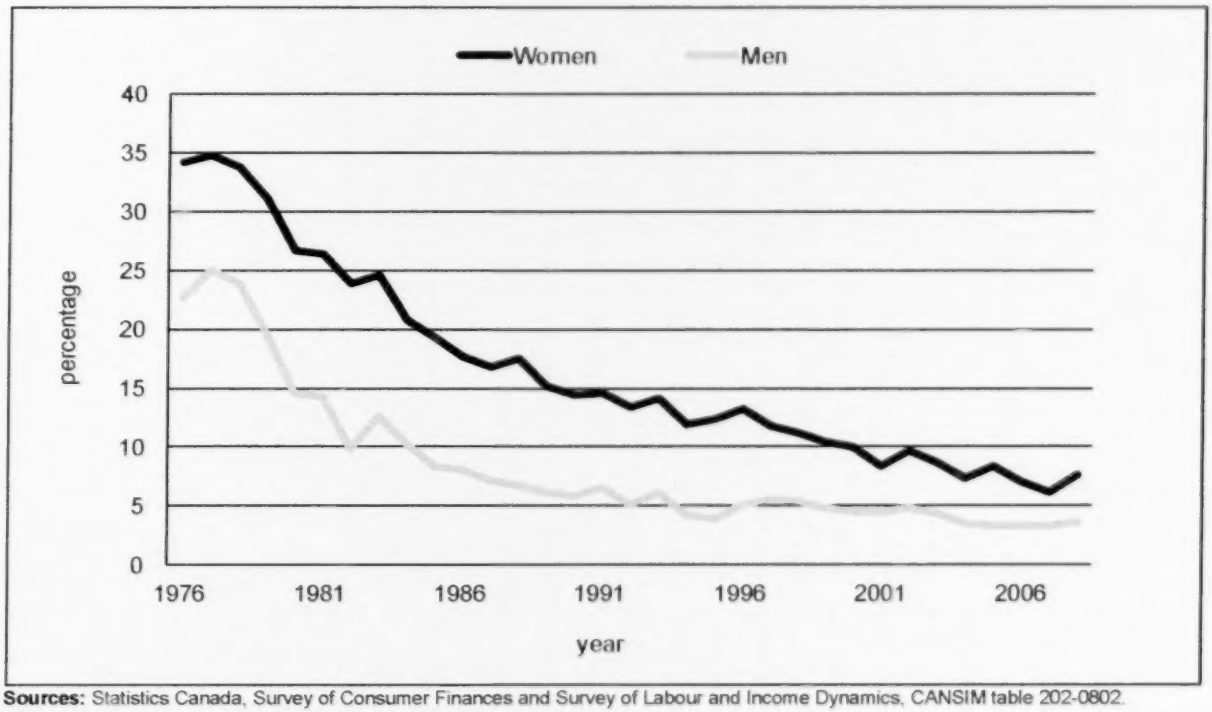
Low income for senior women continues to decline

In 2008, 7.6% of senior women were in low income after tax, a decrease of over three percentage points compared to 1998, when 11% of senior women found themselves in this situation. This reflects an overall downward trend that has been continuing for several decades (Chart 12). Toward the end of the 1970s, more than one in three women aged 65 and over lived in low income.

Despite the decline, the percentage of women aged 65 and over in low income remains higher than men. In 2008, 3.6% of senior men were in low income, which is half the level for senior women.

In 2008, 17% of women aged 65 and over who were living alone were in low income after tax—this was five percentage points higher than the rate for senior men (12%). The proportion of women living alone in low income has declined over time. In 1980, more than half (57%) of senior women living alone were in low income after tax (Table 8).

Chart 12
Women and men aged 65 years and over whose income is below the low income cut-off after tax, Canada, 1976 to 2008



Sources: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances and Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, CANSIM table 202-0802.

Table 8
Women and men aged 65 years and over in low income after tax, by family status, Canada, 1980 to 2008

Year	In a couple		Living alone	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
	percentage			
1980	5.5	6.5	57.1	47.0
1985	3.6	4.4	42.1	28.7
1990	2.2	2.6	30.5	20.6
1995	1.9	1.9	26.7	12.1
2000	2.5	1.7	21.6	17.6
2005	1.3 [E]	1.2 [E]	20.3	13.6
2008	1.8 [E]	1.5 [E]	17.1	12.1

Note: Based on 1992 Statistics Canada low income cut-offs.
Sources: Statistics Canada, Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, 1980 to 2008.

The majority of senior women describe their health in positive terms

In 2009, three out of four women aged 65 and over living in a private household described their health in positive terms (Table 9). When their health status is compared to that of men, very few differences were observed.

People have less of a tendency to perceive their health in positive terms as they get older. One explanation of this may be the prevalence of chronic health conditions at more advanced ages. While the propensity to perceive one's health in positive terms declines with age, more than two in three women (67%) aged 85 and over did so.[12]

12. This chapter draws a general profile of health and care received for senior women in Canada. For more information on the health of immigrant senior women, see the chapter on health.

Table 9
Self-reported health of senior women and men living in private households, by age group, Canada, 2009

Age group	Perception of health							
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Total[1]	In positive terms[2]	In negative terms[2]
	percentage							
65 to 74 years								
Women	14.3 *	29.6 *	35.7	14.8 *	5.6 *	**100.0**	79.6 *	20.4 *
Men	15.6 *	30.6 *	33.5	16.1 *	4.3 *	**100.0**	79.7 *	20.3 *
Women and men	**14.9 ***	**30.1 ***	**34.7**	**15.4 ***	**4.9 ***	**100.0**	**79.7 ***	**20.4 ***
75 to 84 years								
Women	9.3	26.1	35.0	22.1	7.5	**100.0**	70.4	29.6
Men	10.5 *	27.6	34.3	19.5	8.0	**100.0**	72.5 *	27.5 *
Women and men	**9.8**	**26.8 ***	**34.7**	**21.0**	**7.7**	**100.0**	**71.3 ***	**28.7 ***
85 years and over †								
Women	8.9	24.9	33.4	22.7	10.2	**100.0**	67.2	32.8
Men	6.1 [E]	19.5	35.7	25.5	13.2 [E]	**100.0**	61.3	38.7
Women and men	**7.9**	**22.9**	**34.3**	**23.7**	**11.3**	**100.0**	**65.0**	**35.0**
Total — 65 years and over								
Women	12.0	27.9	35.3	18.1	6.7	**100.0**	75.2	24.8
Men	13.2	28.9	33.9	17.9	6.1	**100.0**	76.0	24.0
Women and men	**12.6**	**28.4**	**34.7**	**18.0**	**6.4**	**100.0**	**75.6**	**24.4**

* statistically significant difference in relation to reference group at $p < 0.05$
† refers to reference group
1. The total refers to the sum of the first five categories.
2. The positive terms category includes excellent, very good and good. The negative terms categories includes fair and poor.
Note: No statistically significant difference between women and men.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

Chronic health conditions

Seniors are much more likely than the rest of the population to have chronic health conditions. In 2009, 83% of women aged 65 and over living in a private household reported having at least one long-term health condition, that is, a health condition that had been diagnosed by a health professional and had lasted for six months or more (Table 10).[13] For men, the corresponding proportion was 79%.

The probability of having a long-term health condition increases with age. For women aged 65 to 74, 80% suffered from at least one chronic health condition; for those aged 75 and over, the proportion was 86% (results not shown). This pattern is not confined to senior women, however; the proportions are similar for senior men.

Since chronic health problems are more common among seniors, contacts with medical personnel are generally inevitable. In these circumstances, having access to a regular medical doctor becomes especially important. In 2009, 4% of women aged 65 and over had no regular medical doctor, while for men the corresponding proportion was 5% (results not shown).[14]

Table 10
Chronic health conditions among senior women and men living in a private household, by age group, Canada, 2009

Chronic health condition[1]	65 to 74 years		75 to 84 years		85 years and over †		Total – 65 years and over	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	percentage							
High blood pressure	48.6 ‡*	43.3 *	56.5 ‡	48.5	57.4 ‡	40.5	**52.2 ‡**	**44.9**
Arthritis	46.5 ‡*	27.2 *	52.6 ‡	39.1	57.0 ‡	43.3	**49.6 ‡**	**32.3**
Diabetes	13.1 ‡	21.7	17.6 ‡*	23.2	14.8	20.1	**14.8 ‡**	**22.1**
Heart disease	10.0 ‡*	17.1 *	19.0 ‡*	23.0	27.2	23.7	**14.8 ‡**	**19.5**
Urinary incontinence	9.7 ‡*	6.5 *	13.4 *	12.3	23.1 ‡	14.5	**12.3 ‡**	**9.0**
Asthma	9.4 ‡	6.3	7.7	7.0	7.0 E	8.1 E	**8.6 ‡**	**6.7**
Chronic bronchitis	7.8	7.3 *	8.9	10.9 *	6.6 E	11.1 E	**8.1**	**8.8**
Mood disorder	7.4 ‡*	4.0	5.3 *	4.5	6.0	3.2 E	**6.6 ‡**	**4.2**
Migraine	8.0 ‡*	3.4	4.8 ‡	2.3	5.0 E	5.5 E	**6.6 ‡**	**3.2**
Anxiety	5.8 ‡*	2.6	3.9 ‡*	2.6 E	4.0 E	3.0 E	**5.0 ‡**	**2.6**
Ulcers	5.1 ‡	3.4	4.1	4.4	5.2 E	2.8 E	**4.8 ‡**	**3.7**
Cancer	4.4 ‡	6.1	5.0 ‡	9.0	5.4 ‡	11.4	**4.7 ‡**	**7.4**
Effects of stroke	3.4	2.9 *	4.1 ‡*	5.8 *	8.9 *	7.1 E*	**4.2**	**4.2**
Alzheimer's or other form of cerebral dementia	0.6 E*	0.7 E*	2.9 E*	4.0 E	5.9 E*	F	**1.9 ***	**2.5**
At least one chronic health condition	80.3 ‡	75.1	85.6	83.2	88.9	86.9	**82.9 ‡**	**78.6**

† refers to reference group
‡ statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
* statistically significant difference in relation to reference group at $p < 0.05$
1. Chronic health condition refers to health problems that have been reported by the respondent and diagnosed by a health professional and that have lasted for six months or more.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

Chronic health conditions can cause diseases, some of which pose high risks of death. These conditions can also affect the quality of life and independence of persons living in private households. Depending on their severity, these conditions may induce sufferers to move into a long-term care facility.

13. This percentage refers to persons diagnosed with one of the 14 chronic health conditions included in Table 10. There are other types of conditions for which data were not collected in the Canadian Community Health Survey.
14. For more information on access to formal health care, see the chapter on health.

High blood pressure is senior women's most common chronic health condition

More than one out of two women aged 65 and over (52%) reported that they had been diagnosed with high blood pressure by a health professional in 2009, whereas in 2003, 47% did so. In 2003, this condition was on the rise; 1 million women aged 65 and over had it (results not shown). In 2009, the corresponding number was 1.2 million. High blood pressure is also the most prevalent chronic health condition for senior men: in 2009, 45% of men aged 65 and over had it.

Arthritis is the second most prevalent chronic health condition among seniors. This condition is characterized by pain and by swelling and stiffness in and around the joints and it can make it difficult to perform various everyday activities.[15] It is one of the main causes of chronic pain and mobility limitation among seniors.[16] In 2009, 50% of women aged 65 and over had been diagnosed with this condition, compared to 33% of men. It is also the chronic health problem with the largest gap between senior women and men.

Diabetes and heart disease are also among the most prevalent chronic health problems among women aged 65 years and over. However, men are more likely to suffer from them. Thus, 15% of women reported having diabetes or heart disease, while approximately one out of five men reported having diabetes (22%) or heart disease (20%) (Table 10).

The prevalence of heart disease increases much more substantially by age group for women than for men. Indeed, 10% of women aged 65 to 74 had heart disease, while the proportion doubled for those aged 75 to 84 (19%) and climbed to 27% among those 85 years and over.

Tobacco use and diet differed

Senior women (41%) are much less likely than senior men (68%) to have smoked in their lifetime. However, men appear to be more likely than women to have stopped smoking. In 2009, 9% of women aged 65 and over were using tobacco regularly or occasionally, slightly less than the 11% registered for men (Table 11).

Table 11
Current and past tobacco use among senior women and men, by age group, Canada, 2009

Tobacco use	65 to 74 years		75 to 84 years		85 years and over		Total 65 years and over	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	percentage							
Regularly or occasionally	11.0 *	13.6	6.4	7.4	2.6 [E]	3.7 [E]	8.6 *	10.8
Never	89.0 *	86.4	93.6	92.6	97.4 [E]	96.2 [E]	91.4 *	89.2
Has smoked								
Yes	45.4 *	67.7	36.1 *	69.4	29.1 *	61.1	40.6 *	67.8
No	54.7 *	32.3	63.9 *	30.6	70.9 *	38.9	59.4 *	32.2

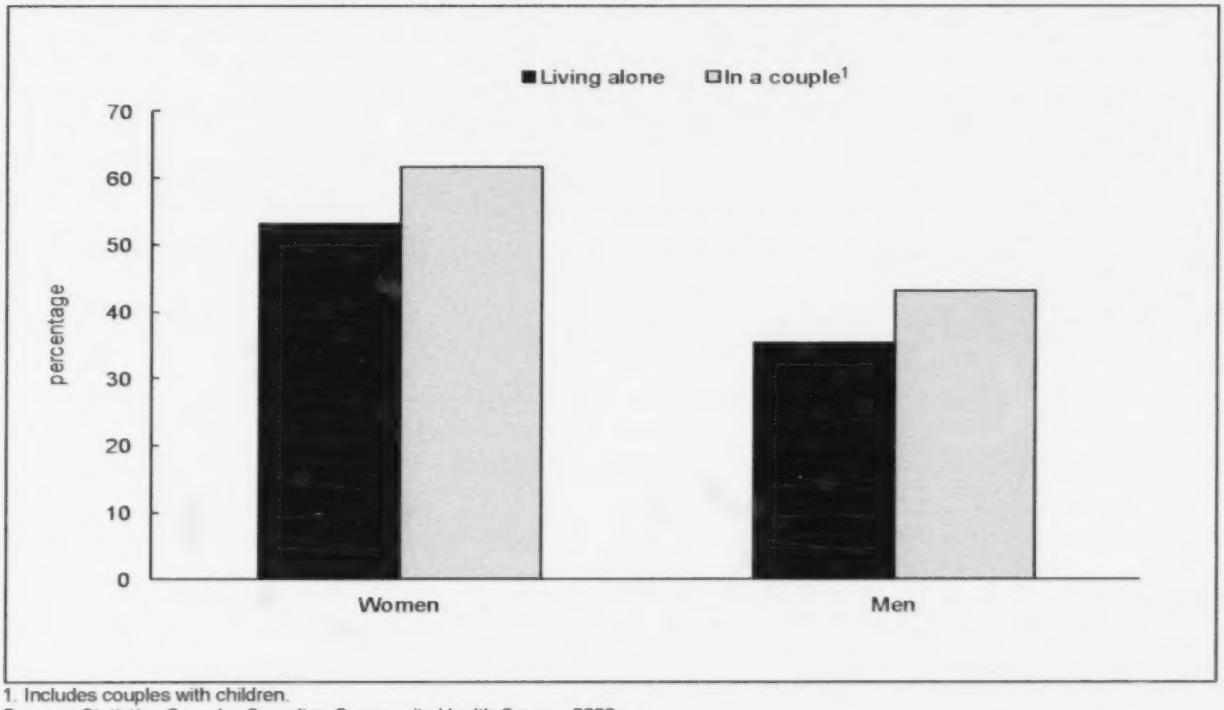
* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

15. For more information, see "Life with arthritis in Canada: A personal and public health challenge," *2010 Arthritis Surveillance Report*, published by the Public Health Agency of Canada, 128 p. http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/arthritis-arthrite/lwaic-vaaac-10/2-eng.php (site visited on January 20, 2011).
16. Wilkins, Kathryn. 2004. "Incident arthritis in relation to excess weight," *Health Reports*, Vol. 15, no. 1, Statistics Canada. Catalogue no. 82-003, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/studies-etudes/82-003/archive/2004/6764-eng.pdf (site visited on January 20, 2011).

With respect to diet, women are more likely than men to consume a larger quantity of fruits and vegetables daily. Slightly more than half (55%) of senior women reported consuming five or more portions of fruits and vegetables per day, compared with 41% of senior men (results not shown).

Whether one lives alone or in a couple affects the consumption of fruits and vegetables. Women aged 65 and over living in couples were more likely than those living alone to consume a large quantity of fruits and vegetables. The same pattern was observed for senior men (Chart 13).

Chart 13
Women and men aged 65 years and over who consume 5 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, by living arrangement, Canada, 2009



1. Includes couples with children.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

Senior women are more likely to be physically inactive than their male counterparts

While it is beneficial to remain active, health conditions can limit physical activity, especially as a person grows older. In 2009, physical inactivity was more prevalent among women than among men. Also, inactivity increased substantially by age group. It went from 56% for women aged 65 to 74 to 81% for those aged 85 and over (Table 12).

Walking is the most popular physical activity for seniors, both female and male. In 2009, more than 6 out of 10 people had engaged in this activity in the previous three months.

Table 12
Physical activity and walking among senior women and men, by age group, Canada, 2009

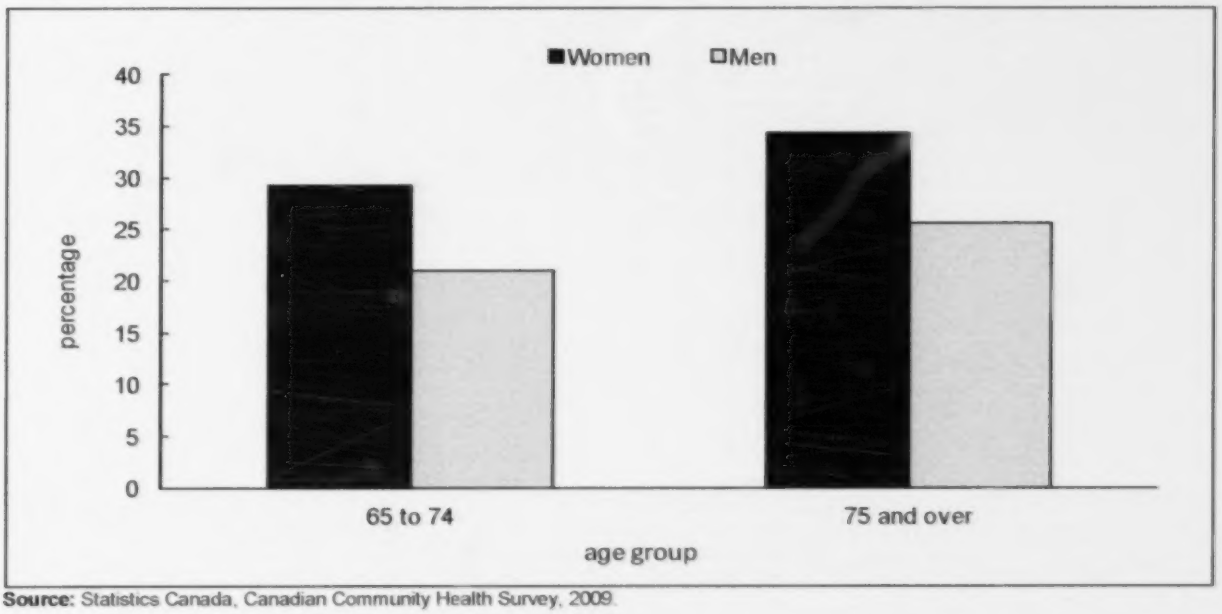
Physical activity	Women			Men			Women	Men
	65 to 74 years	75 to 84 years	85 years and over †	65 to 74 years	75 to 84 years	85 years and over †	Total 65 years and over	
	percentage							
Active or moderately active	43.8 ‡*	30.6 ‡*	19.4 ‡	53.3 *	46.9 *	32.5 ‡	37.2	50.0
Inactive	56.2 ‡*	69.4 ‡*	80.7 ‡	46.7 *	53.1 *	67.5 ‡	62.8	50.0
Walking	69.9	55.7 ‡	44.4	67.8 *	59.9	48.0	62.5	63.8

† refers to reference group
‡ statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
* statistically significant difference in relation to reference group at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

Pain and injuries more common for women

Pain and injuries can affect quality of life and limit activities. Approximately one in three senior women reported that they usually felt pain, which is higher than the proportion for men (slightly more than one in five). Women aged 65 to 74 and those 75 and over were more likely to report that they usually felt pain than men in the same age group (Chart 14).

Chart 14
Senior women and men who reported experiencing pain, by age group, Canada, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009.

Additionally, women are more likely to sustain injuries than men. Nearly one senior woman in 10 (9.4%) had been injured in the previous year seriously enough to limit their daily activities, compared with 8.3% of men (results not shown). Fractures and sprains were the most commonly reported injuries. Of senior women who had injured themselves in the previous 12 months, 31% had suffered a fracture and 27% a sprain or strain. These types of injuries were also the most common for men: 41% had suffered a sprain and 19% a fracture in the previous 12 months.

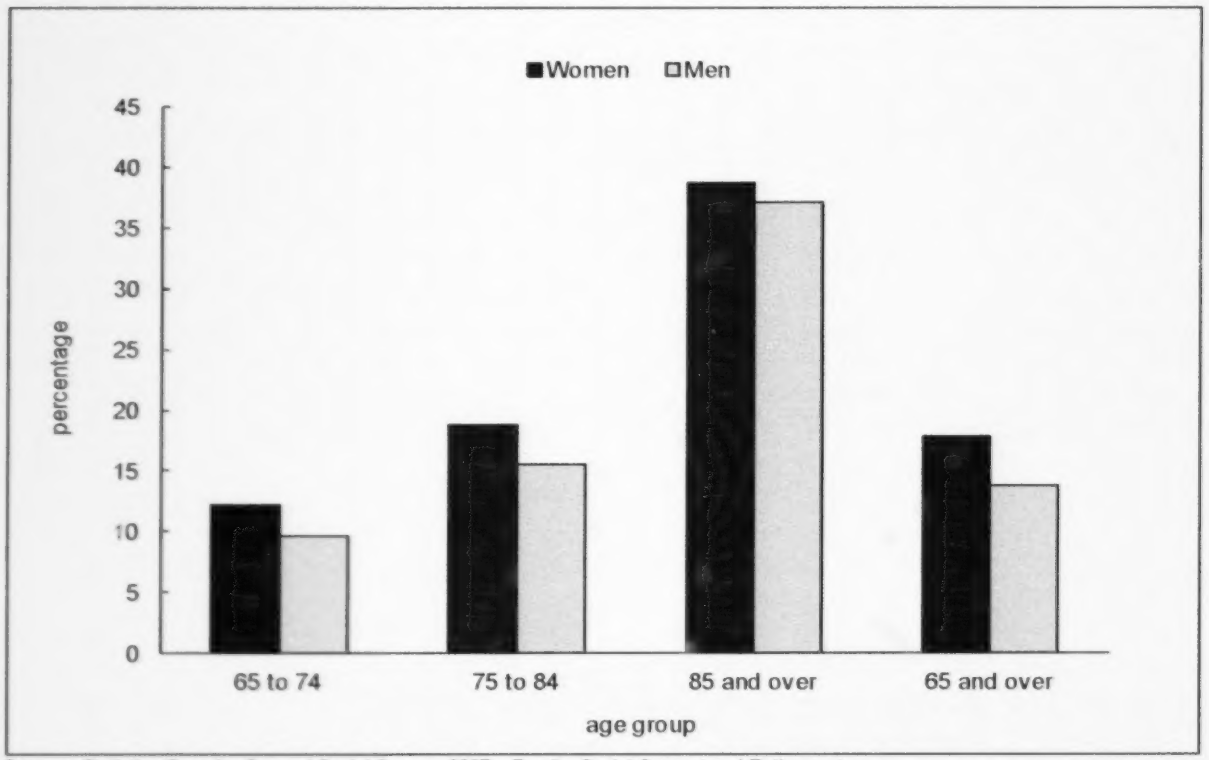
Among senior women living alone, 11% had injured themselves, compared to 8.5% of those living in couples (results not shown). Seniors living alone may have to perform by themselves tasks for which they should request someone's assistance.

More senior women than men receive informal assistance with everyday activities because of a chronic health condition

Chronic health problems or a long-term physical limitation may affect one's independence in carrying out everyday activities such as preparing meals, housekeeping and co-ordinating health care.

In 2007, nearly one in five women aged 65 and over (18%) had received informal assistance for domestic or personal activities because of a chronic health condition. For men aged 65 and over, 14% received informal assistance. The proportion climbed to 39% for women aged 85 and over (Chart 15). In a context of a growing number of women aged 85 and over, the need for informal assistance and support is likely to increase.

Chart 15
Senior women and men who received assistance with everyday activities because of a chronic health condition, by age group, Canada, 2007



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2007 – Family, Social Support and Retirement.

Also, when they receive assistance, women (54%) were more likely than men (31%) to receive informal assistance, mainly from one of their children (Table 13).[17] In 36% of cases, the main caregiver was a daughter; in 19% of cases, a son.

Table 13
Women and men aged 65 years and over who received assistance because of a chronic health problem, by relationship to main caregiver, Canada, 2007

Relationship to main caregiver	Women	Men	Total
	percentage		
Spouse	20.7	48.4 *	**30.7**
Daughter	35.5	15.9 E*	**28.4**
Son	18.7	14.9 E	**17.4**
Other family member or friend	16.4	15.6 E	**16.1**
Close friend	8.7	5.2 E*	**7.5**

* statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2007 – Family, Social Support and Retirement.

A smaller proportion of women (21%) than of men (48%) had their spouse as their main caregiver. Many factors can explain this. First, men have a shorter life expectancy and they are more likely than women to have, at an earlier age, a health condition that may cause a loss of independence or long-term hospitalization. Second, senior women were much more likely to be living alone than senior men, and they were more likely to not have a spouse who could help them with everyday activities.[18] The majority of men (62%) (results not shown) who provided assistance to their spouse were aged 65 and over.

Transportation for shopping or banking (63%) was the type of assistance most often received by women aged 65 and over from their main caregiver (Table 14). Meal preparation and household tasks (meal cleanup, housecleaning, laundry or sewing) were the second most common type of assistance (47%) received by senior women.

Table 14
Type of assistance received by senior women and men because of a chronic health condition, as a percentage, by age group, Canada, 2007

Type of assistance received	Women			Men		
	65 to 74 years	75 years and over	Total 65 years and over	65 to 74 years	75 years and over	Total 65 years and over
	percentage					
Transportation for grocery shopping or other necessities, banking or bill paying	52.8 *	69.3	**63.4** ‡	43.8	58.0	**52.2**
Meal preparation, washing dishes, housecleaning, laundry or sewing	45.7 ‡	47.7	**47.0**	32.5	49.9	**42.7**
House maintenance or outdoor work	48.2	44.2	**45.6**	42.2	50.6	**47.2**
Personal care	18.2	25.9	**23.1**	21.4 E	26.9	**24.6**
Medical treatment or procedures	19.3	23.4	**21.9**	20.4 E	28.9	**25.4**
Coordination of health care	18.2 ‡	37.7 ‡	**30.7** ‡	22.1 E	42.1	**33.9**

* statistically significant difference between age groups at $p < 0.05$
‡ statistically significant difference between women and men at $p < 0.05$
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2007 – Family, Social Support and Retirement.

17. People who are assisted may be receiving help from more than one source. In this chapter the focus is on the main caregiver—namely, the person who devoted the most time and resources to providing care to the assisted person.
18. This chapter is primarily concerned with health and access to informal care. It shows the nature of the relationship between the main caregiver and the senior woman or man receiving care and the type of care received. To learn more about the care that seniors may provide, see the chapter on time use and unpaid work.

Living in collective households or institutions

Most seniors aged 65 and over lived in private households in 2006—91% of women and 95% of men. Owing to their greater longevity, a higher percentage of women spent at least some of their senior years in collective or institutional environments than did men—9.3% of senior women and 5.1% of senior men in 2006 (Table 15). Of the 324,500 seniors who lived in some form of collective or institutional residence, about 7 in 10 were women.

The percentage of seniors living in health care and related facilities increased with age, and approximately doubled for senior women (as well as senior men) in each successive age group. In general, the percentage of women and men living in health care and related facilities was relatively low until age 80. Few women and men in their late sixties and early seventies (2.4% or fewer) lived in health care and related facilities in 2006, increasing to 13% of women in their early eighties (and 8.4% of men). One-third (32%) of senior women age 85 and older lived in such settings compared with one-fifth (21%) of men in this age group. The share of senior women and men who lived in other types of collectives such as lodging and rooming houses was relatively low in 2006—0.9% or less across all age groups.

Table 15
Population in institutions and collective dwellings, by sex and age group, Canada, 2006

Age group	Women			Men		
	Total – Collective dwellings	Health care and related facilities	Other collective dwellings	Total – Collective dwellings	Health care and related facilities	Other collective dwellings
	percentage					
65 years and over	**9.3**	**8.8**	**0.6**	**5.1**	**4.6**	**0.5**
65 to 69 years	**1.6**	1.2	0.4	**1.7**	1.2	0.5
70 to 74 years	**2.9**	2.4	0.5	**2.4**	2.0	0.5
75 to 79 years	**6.1**	5.6	0.5	**4.3**	3.9	0.4
80 to 84 years	**13.5**	12.8	0.6	**8.9**	8.4	0.5
85 years and over	**33.2**	32.3	0.9	**21.1**	20.6	0.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2006.

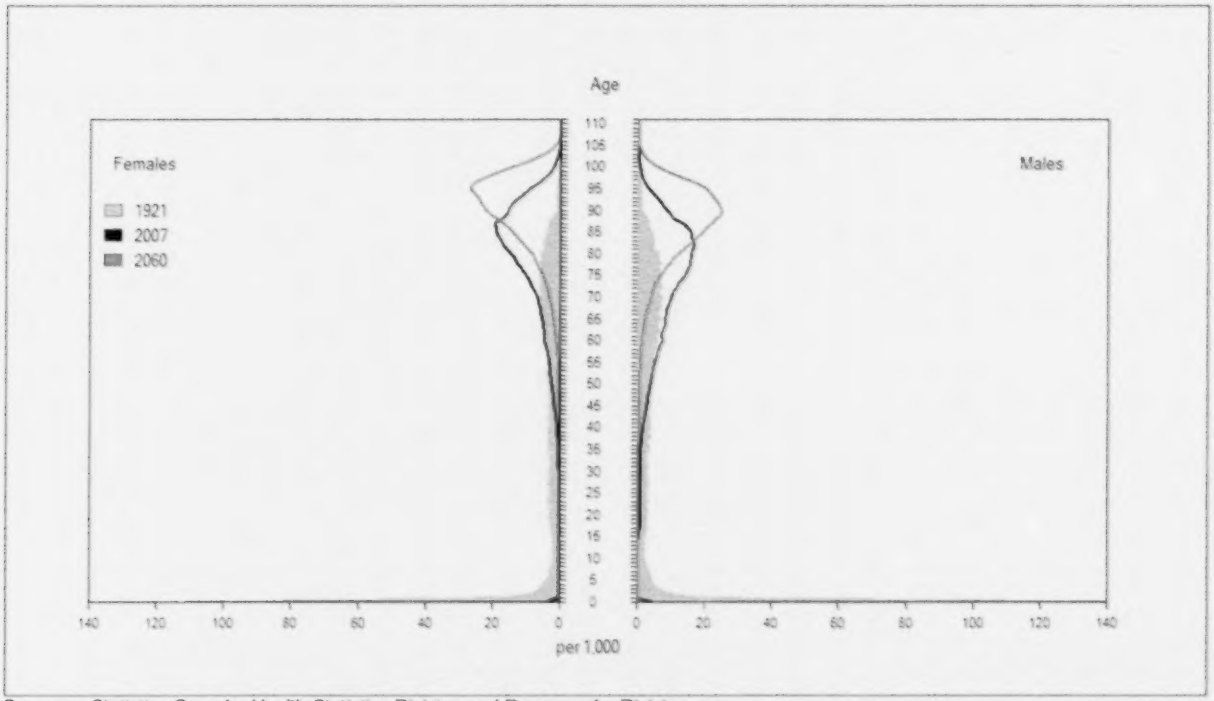
Senior women living longer

In 2007, there were 235,200 deaths in Canada, 78% of which occurred to people aged 65 years and older (96,500 deaths of senior women and 86,100 of senior men). The overall number of deaths has been increasing for many years, due primarily to both a growing population and an aging population. The combination of higher mortality rates at older ages and greater numbers of people in these age groups will continue to push up the number of deaths as baby boomers get older and enter their senior years.

An age and sex pyramid graphically depicts the number of deaths per 1,000 population by age for the years 1921 and 2007, as well as the projected number for 2060 according to the medium-growth scenario of the most recent population projections (Chart 16). In 1921, there was a relatively high number of deaths for infants and in the early childhood years for both males and females, reflecting higher infant and childhood mortality during this period when health and medical conditions were less advanced than today.

There was also a concentration of deaths per 1,000 population among those 65 years and older in 1921, but this concentration was lower overall, and more evenly distributed across the senior years, compared with 2007 and 2060. The number of deaths per 1,000 population in 2007 was concentrated during the ages of the late seventies to early nineties for both women and men, a phenomenon known as the 'compression of mortality.' Indeed, the largest number of deaths for women in 2007 was at age 87 and at 82 for men. In contrast, for 2060, there may be a further upward transition in the number of deaths per 1,000 population to even older ages.

Chart 16
Age pyramid of deaths, relative value, Canada, 1921, 2007 and 2060



Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

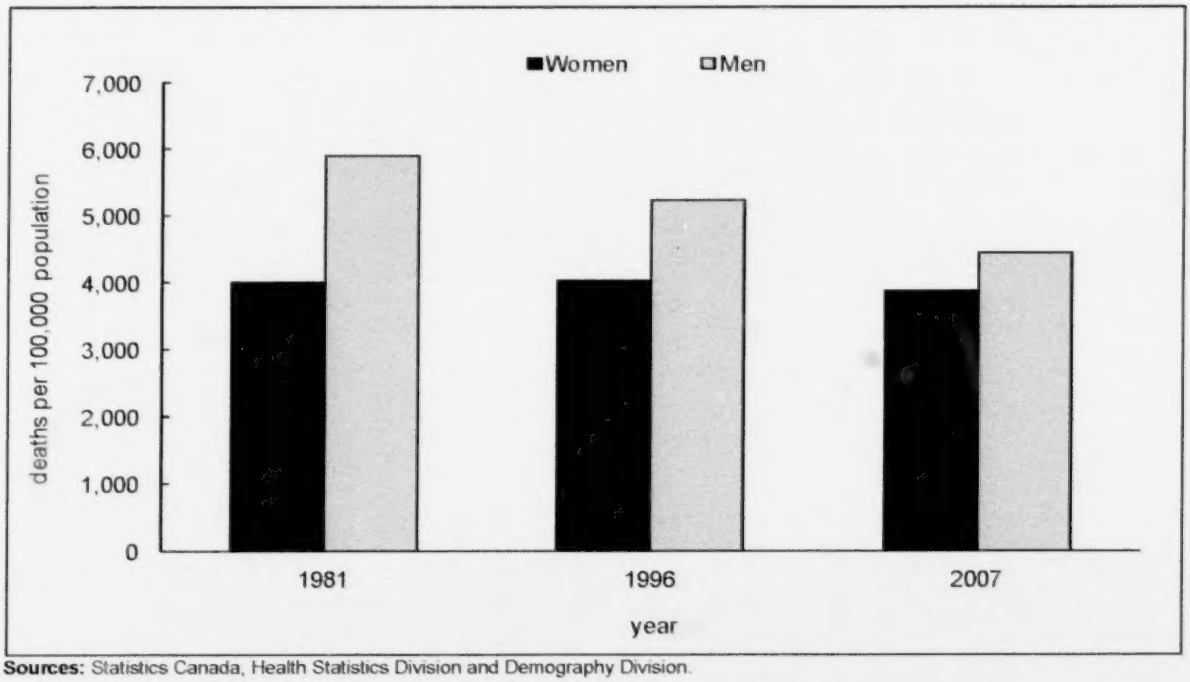
Heart disease and cancer cause most deaths for senior women

Senior women's mortality rate in 2007 was somewhat lower than senior men's (Chart 17). The age-specific mortality rate for women aged 65 and over was 3,872.9 deaths per 100,000 population in 2007, little changed from two earlier periods, 1981 and 1996, when it was just over 4,000. In contrast, senior men saw a sharp decline in the age-specific mortality rate to 4,436.0 in 2007, from 5,252.8 in 1996 and 5,915.8 in 1981.

The leading cause of death in 2007, among both women and men aged 65 years and over, were malignant neoplasms, or cancer: the rates were 945.5 deaths per 100,000 for women and 1,363.6 for men (Table 16). The second leading cause of death was heart disease, which had a lower mortality rate for senior women (894.1 deaths per 100,000 population) than for senior men (1,058.4). In contrast, the mortality rate for another common disease of the circulatory system, cerebrovascular disease or strokes, was higher for senior women than senior men (308.0 and 254.4 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively).

In 1981, heart disease was responsible for more deaths of senior women—1,646.1 deaths per 100,000 population—than was cancer—821.5 deaths per 100,000 population (Chart 18). The same trend was observed for senior men, although their mortality rate for each cause was much higher in 1981 (2,365.2 and 1,427.7 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively). From 1981 to 2007, the mortality rate from heart disease fell substantially for both senior men and senior women, while deaths from cancer rose for senior women but slipped for senior men.

Chart 17
Mortality rates for women and men aged 65 years and over, Canada, 1981, 1996 and 2007



Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

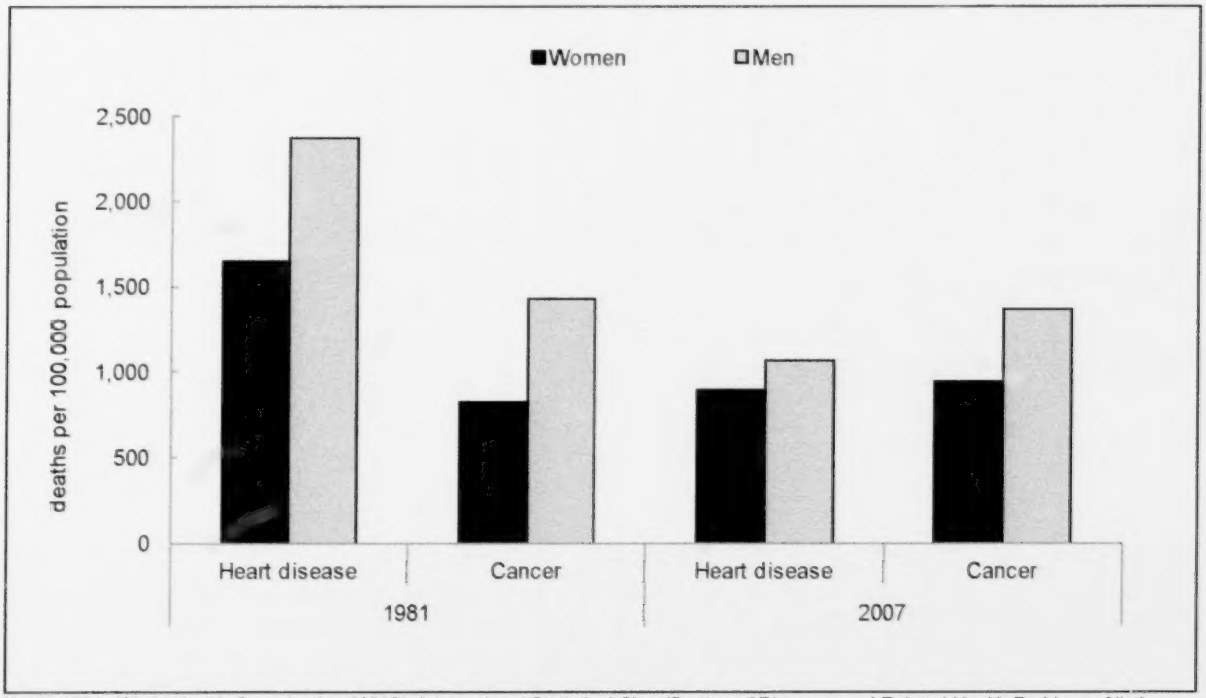
Table 16
Selected causes of death among senior women and men aged 65 years and over, Canada, 2007

Selected cause of death[1]	Women	Men
	deaths per 100,000 population	
Malignant neoplasms (cancer)	945.5	1,363.6
Diseases of the heart (heart disease)	894.1	1,058.4
Cerebrovascular diseases (stroke)	308.0	254.4
Chronic lower respiratory diseases	187.1	263.5
Alzheimer's disease	165.4	87.8
Diabetes mellitus (diabetes)	122.2	156.9
Influenza and pneumonia	112.8	108.8
Accidents (unintentional injuries)	105.0	114.3
Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis (kidney disease)	72.2	86.9
Chronic liver diseases and cirrhosis (liver disease)	17.9	38.8
Intentional self-harm (suicide)	4.3	17.9
All causes of death	**3,872.9**	**4,436.0**

1. World Health Organization (WHO). International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision (ICD-10).

Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

Chart 18
Mortality rates for women and men aged 65 years and over for selected causes, Canada, 1981 and 2007



Note: 1981: World Health Organization (WHO). International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Ninth Revision (ICD-9).
2007: World Health Organization (WHO). International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision (ICD-10).
Sources: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

Other leading causes of death for seniors in 2007 included chronic lower respiratory diseases (187.1 and 263.5 deaths per 100,000 population for senior women and men, respectively). The mortality rate for Alzheimer's disease was 165.4 deaths per 100,000 population for women aged 65 years and over, about twice the rate for senior men (87.8 deaths per 100,000 population). The mortality rate from diabetes mellitus, however, was lower for senior women than for senior men (122.2 and 156.9 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively).

There were many changes in the patterns of cancer deaths from 1981 to 2007 (Table 17). Mortality rates owing to lung cancer, although lower for senior women than for senior men for each age group, rose sharply from 1981 to 2007 for senior women but decreased for senior men under age 85. In fact, for senior women aged 65 to 74, the mortality rate more than doubled in the 25-year period from 81.3 deaths per 100,000 population in 1981 to 196.2 in 2007. Among older senior women, the mortality rate due to lung cancer has more than tripled from 1981 to 2007, from 83.4 to 260.2 deaths per 100,000 population for those aged 75 to 84, and from 69.3 to 248.5 for those aged 85 and over. This is because older cohorts of women have been replaced by younger cohorts, who had a much higher prevalence of smoking early in life.

Table 17
Cancer mortality rates for women and men aged 65 years and over, by type of cancer, Canada, 1981 and 2007

Type of cancer	65 to 74 years		75 to 84 years		85 years and over	
	1981	2007	1981	2007	1981	2007
	deaths per 100,000 population					
Lung	**213.9**	**244.7**	**260.6**	**364.5**	**182.2**	**346.1**
Women	81.3	196.2	83.4	260.2	69.3	248.5
Men	373.1	298.2	527.2	505.8	414.0	558.5
Breast (Women)	**108.5**	**77.4**	**143.3**	**133.5**	**223.8**	**236.4**
Prostate (Men)	**94.0**	**62.8**	**323.8**	**227.9**	**676.5**	**672.4**
Colorectal	**80.6**	**59.4**	**155.5**	**122.7**	**244.7**	**224.5**
Women	72.6	46.1	138.3	103.4	232.2	215.1
Men	90.3	74.1	181.4	148.8	270.3	245.1
Other cancers	**424.8**	**388.5**	**728.1**	**738.1**	**1,052.8**	**1,179.3**
Women	348.9	314.2	613.4	602.7	920.3	1,041.6
Men	515.9	470.2	900.8	921.5	1,324.8	1,478.9

Note: 1981: World Health Organization (WHO). International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Ninth Revision (ICD-9).
2007: World Health Organization (WHO). International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision (ICD-10).
Source: Statistics Canada, Health Statistics Division and Demography Division.

In contrast, mortality rates from breast cancer decreased from 1981 to 2007 for women aged 65 to 84. This was true for 65- to 74-year-olds (from 108.5 to 77.4 deaths per 100,000 population) and for 75- to 84-year-olds (from 143.3 to 133.5). For senior women aged 85 and over, the breast cancer mortality rate rose slightly, from 223.8 deaths per 1,000 population in 1981 to 236.4 in 2007.

Mortality rates due to colorectal cancer also decreased across the age groups of both senior women and men from 1981 to 2007. Among women aged 65 to 74, the mortality rate fell from 72.6 to 46.1 deaths per 100,000 population; among women aged 75 to 84, the rate fell from 138.3 to 103.4. The mortality rate for women aged 85 and over also declined, from 232.2 deaths per 100,000 population in 1981 to 215.1 in 2007.